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INTELLIGENCE PANEL WANTS INDEPENDENT CHECKS ON COVERT FUNDING
WASHINGTON

The Senate Intelligence Committee said today it wanted to create an independent mechanism to keep track of funding for U.S. covert actions.

"We are in a situation now where we must rely solely on information provided to us by the people we are overseeing" in the CIA and other branches of the U.S. intelligence community, a committee spokesman said.

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A Committee chairman Sen. David Boren and vice chairman William Cohen said in a statement they had written ~~to Robert Gates, acting director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Frank Carlucci, President Reagan's national security adviser,~~ to seek their views on how to create such an independent body.

"We have pointed out in our letter that we do not believe a full, comprehensive capability is needed," said Boren, an Oklahoma Democrat, and Cohen, a Maine Republican. "But independent spot checks will be very valuable."

The committee spokesman said the new system would primarily check on the funding for covert actions, rather than oversee the policy itself.

He said the move was part of an on-going effort to improve the committee's ability to conduct its intelligence oversight responsibilities and was not prompted by the Iran arms scandal.

Investigators have said that some \$20 million in funds generated by the covert sale of U.S. arms to Iran was unaccounted for and may have been diverted to U.S.-supported Nicaraguan rebels called "contras."

"The committee is intensifying its oversight of covert action," Boren and Cohen said in their statement. "An integral part of that is the need for a unit independent of those conducting covert operations, to audit the activity."